

“Stay out of my territory”: Walter White’s evolving authority as portrayed through camera techniques and narrative in *Breaking Bad*

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Master’s Thesis
English
Languages and literature
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Autumn 2020

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1 Introduction

The television series *Breaking Bad* uses various interesting camera techniques and other methods that may influence the way the characters' authority is conveyed. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to examine how *Breaking Bad*'s protagonist Walter White's evolving authority and persona in relation to the other characters is portrayed and amplified with camera movement and angles, mise-en-scène and other important filmmaking techniques, as well as in and through the narrative structure. This will be done by comparing the protagonist to three other characters in the series, while focusing on the cinematography and features in the narrative structure that are used to portray their authority in each scene. The other three characters whose power shall be discussed will be Hank Schrader, Jesse Pinkman, and Gustavo "Gus" Fring. These three characters' relationships to the protagonist are quite different, and they are, in a way, on different levels of social hierarchy. This can help diversify the analysis, and to see if the methods used to portray changing power dynamics depend on the character.

The aim of this study is to examine whether different cinematographic techniques are used to portray different levels of authority, and to see what these techniques may be. Examining the changing authorities between the characters without also paying attention to Walter's criminal alter ego, Heisenberg, would require ignoring many relevant aspects of the power dynamics. This is why another aim of this thesis is to compare the protagonist's authority to that of the other characters in order to see how the differences are portrayed, and to examine how these differences between the characters' relationships are conveyed through both of the character's personas, Walter and Heisenberg. The protagonist seems to evolve into his criminal alter ego, as the series progresses, and the two sides of the character appear to have different levels of authority in certain situations. The scenes chosen for the analysis seem to offer many visual and other narrative aspects that might affect the way authority is portrayed.

The following section introduces the materials (section 2) used in this thesis, after which there is a section introducing the analytic framework (section 3), including theory and the methods used for the analysis. The materials, especially the series itself, need to be introduced first, in order to have a better understanding of what exactly is being examined. The theory section offers information about past research relating to the topic, and the methods section introduces further the analyzing methods already explained briefly in this introduction. After the analytic framework, begins the core analysis section, which examines Walter White's evolving authority and how it is portrayed (section 4). This has been divided into sections for each of the three characters Walter White is compared to, with subsections for each analyzed scene, also paying attention to which of the protagonist's personas is

present in the scene. Each character is introduced briefly in the beginning of that character's section, the first of the introductions being about the protagonist, who does not have his own subsection alone. The observations made from the analysis will then be discussed in the subsequent section, along with the conclusions (section 5). The final section of the thesis includes all the references used throughout it.

2 Description of materials

This section introduces the materials used in the upcoming analysis section. Most of the material used in this study is from episodes of *Breaking Bad*. Episodes titled “Rabid dog”, “Face off”, “ABQ”, “Cancer man”, “Live free or die”, “Problem dog”, “I see you”, “Mandala”, and “Breakage” are only briefly mentioned in the analysis (section 4), in order to provide more information about a character or to support a theory. The main analysis is based on scenes from episodes titled “Breaking Bad”, “Box cutter”, “Blood money”, “Buyout”, “Buried”, “Abiquiu”, “Over”, and “Bug”. These episodes have been directed and written by various people. All the timestamps and screen captures in the analysis (section 4) are from a *Breaking Bad: The Complete Series* DVD set by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment.

Breaking Bad is an American television series, which first aired on the American television channel AMC in 2008 and was created by Vince Gilligan. The series is about an overqualified high school chemistry teacher in Albuquerque, New Mexico, called Walter White, who gets diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. He is worried about not leaving anything behind for his family when he dies, as he wants to provide for them. After a ride-along to taking down a methamphetamine business with his Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent brother-in-law, Hank Schrader (discussed in subsection 4.1), Walter meets with his old chemistry student Jesse Pinkman (discussed in subsection 4.3), who was involved in the drug business, but managed to escape without getting caught. White is interested in joining the illegal trade for the money, so that he could quickly earn enough for his family. White and Pinkman start a small-scale methamphetamine business together, in which White handles the manufacturing, and Pinkman oversees distribution. White eventually starts operating under the alias Heisenberg, in order to keep his real identity hidden.

After many episodes and problems with other people in the drug business, the two characters end up working for Gustavo “Gus” Fring (discussed in subsection 4.2), who owns a chain of fast food fried chicken restaurants, which he uses as a cover up and for money laundering while running a larger-scale methamphetamine operation in the background. White ultimately causes Fring’s death, being able to continue the drug business without having an employer telling him what to do. In the end, his secret identity is revealed, and after a series of events he dies just before the police get to him. The first scene in the analysis is from the very first *Breaking Bad* episode, examining White’s authority before joining the drug trade (discussed in subsection 4.1.1). However, the rest of the analysis is based on scenes that happen after White and Pinkman first start their methamphetamine business. This way the protagonist’s evolving into Heisenberg can be analyzed more effectively.

Breaking Bad is a successful and highly rated series. It has been nominated for and has won several awards, including fifteen Emmy Awards (Television Academy, n.d.) and two Golden Globe Awards (Hollywood Foreign Press Association, n.d.). The series also received a score of 99/100 on Metacritic and was thus featured in the 2014 edition of the *Guinness World Records* book as the "highest rated TV series" (Janela, 2013). The success of the series has also led to a spin-off series titled *Better Call Saul*, which tells the backstory of the character of Saul Goodman, Walter White's lawyer in *Breaking Bad*. Additionally, in 2019, a film titled *El Camino: A Breaking Bad Movie* was released on Netflix. It follows the story of Jesse Pinkman after the events of *Breaking Bad*.

3 Description of analytic framework

In the first part of this section (subsection 3.1), it is first introduced how the topic of this thesis, and other relevant and connected themes have been studied before. It appears that this particular topic may not have been studied much in the past. Finding similar, academic and peer-reviewed papers that might offer insight into the analysis of this study on *Breaking Bad* or its cinematographic elements seems to be quite challenging. This shows that there might be a gap in research regarding topics such as this one, examining the portrayal of authoritative characters in films or series, especially through methods of film analysis. However, there is a lot of past research about filmmaking techniques and cinematography, focusing on many different aspects, such as mise-en-scène and camera angles. The second subsection (subsection 3.2) introduces the methods used in the analysis. Researching past theory on the topic, as well as introducing the methods of analyzing, are important in order to better understand different aspects of the analyzing process itself.

3.1 Previous research on analyzing film and narrative

There are some previous studies conducted directly on *Breaking Bad*. For example, Peters (2015) examines Walter White's masculinity through the series' linguistic construction, using multiple theories about language and identity (p. 2). This topic is quite similar to that of this thesis, as the displays of masculinity and power can often be associated with each other. However, although the linguistic elements in relation to Walter White in Peters' paper are relevant to the following analysis, it does not include many visual cinematographic elements.

Another study related directly to *Breaking Bad* and Walter White is by Wittwer (2017), and compares the series to a classic fairy tale and points out that *Breaking Bad* is an "examination of agency" (p. 76), perhaps suggesting that the series addresses topics of authority and power. These topics are very relevant to this thesis, as agency and power are also examined here. White can be seen as an anti-hero (Wittwer, 2017, p. 71). Anti-heroes are often portrayed as characters who gradually evolve into more powerful beings. This seems to be what happens to White, as well, which can be seen from the analysis (section 4). Witter (2017) also compares Walter White to Rumpelstiltskin and his pride (p. 77–78). Both of these characters are proud of their secret identities and use them as tools for gaining power. However, both of them also end up eventually getting defeated due to their "blind pride" (Wittwer, 2017, p. 77–78).

A study by Newsom et al. (2020) suggests that Walter White is a typical example of a "nuanced case of masculinity" (p. 261). It mentions that the character starts as a kind and intelligent high school chemistry teacher, but later starts to feel powerful as he turns into a crime boss. The study

also argues that Walter feels entitled to the power, and as he evolves into Heisenberg, he starts to become more traditionally masculine (Newsom et al., 2020, p. 261–262).

Spadoni (2014) introduces various elements of film analysis, many of which are relevant to the topic of this thesis, as these can also be applied to analyzing series. One of the introduced aspects of filmmaking is about analyzing the meaning of the story in the film or the series. According to Spadoni (2014), referential meaning can be thought of as the plot of a film or a series (p. 19). Referential meaning is something that comes from an encounter between a film or a series and its viewer. It can remind one that “all meaning is constructed, a negotiation between the artwork and its perceiver” (Spadoni, 2014, p. 20), and it is not something that has necessarily been added into the work as it was made. Explicit meaning, for one, refers to the level of meaning where one can find the moral point of the work (Spadoni, 2014, p. 20). Implicit meaning is a more abstract level of meaning, as it “affords more room for disagreement and competing claims” (Spadoni, 2014, p. 20). This means that implicit meaning depends entirely on the viewer, and their opinions.

Another one of the elements that Spadoni (2014) introduces is *mise-en-scène*. It is originally a French term, and it refers to everything that appears in front of the camera. It is split into four categories, which are setting, costume and makeup, lighting, and staging (Spadoni, 2014, p. 71). This is very relevant to the topic of this thesis, as some of these categories are examined in the analysis (section 4) regarding *Breaking Bad*. Scene settings, the colors of some of the characters’ clothes, as well as the lighting of some shots are examined in order to understand their possible connection to the portrayal of Walter White’s authority. For example, colors often have different meanings, and can be used to convey certain emotions or traits in a character. In addition, the atmosphere of a scene can be changed by using different types of lighting.

One way to categorize the scenes chosen for the following analysis is by motif. Motif is a recurring element in a film or a series that has some important meaning for the story. It can be, for example, a color, a camera angle or a physical item (Spadoni, 2014, p. 40). Although it is not certain how accurate the information from the following source is, it has been written by a screenwriter and director, and seems logical. Lannom (2020) suggests that a motif can also be an element of sound design, a line of dialogue or a symbol. Examining the dialogue in the scenes is an important part of the analysis. Another possible motif that can be found from the scenes in the analysis section, is a visual motif. Visual motifs are patterns that recur in the form of, for example props or costumes (Lannom, 2020). Props are objects that serve a function within the narrative of the film or the series (Spadoni, 2014, p. 76). The purpose of a motif is to support the story’s theme, or the meaning of the story (Lannom, 2020).

The scenes analyzed in the subsequent sections each include a visual object that can be associated with the concept of power and authority, and that can support the power narrative. These items include, for instance, a gun, a kitchen knife, a box cutter, a glass of whiskey, a bottle of tequila, and poison. In addition, one of the analyzed scenes includes a garage door remote control, which does not directly relate to power, but in the context of the series it can be associated with control. The objects in each of those scenes are diegetic elements, which means that they are part of the *Breaking Bad* world, in which the story unfolds. In other words, it means that the characters in the series can be aware of the objects, and they are not something that only the viewer can know about. An example of something like this would be background music, which the characters cannot hear. This kind of element is called nondiegetic (Spadoni, 2014, p. 50). Although the items are not all that similar, or otherwise in the same category, they can be thought of as recurring elements that emphasize the characters' authority in each scene.

Another possible motif that can be seen in the analysis, perhaps even clearer, is color. There are many scenes in *Breaking Bad*, in which colors are used to portray certain emotions regarding a character. In general, a character's outfit, for example, can have certain colors that are related to the motif, and give the viewer hints about the character's emotions or personality (Spadoni, 2014, p. 77). Although the following online sources are not peer reviewed, nor is there any proof of their reliability, the information they offer seems to be rational based on everything that can be seen in the *Breaking Bad* scenes in the analysis section.¹ The creator of *Breaking Bad*, Vince Gilligan, states that color has a big importance in the series, and in creating it, they always tried to pay attention to the color that a character is dressed in, as it can represent the character's state of mind (Flaherty, 2011). In another interview, Gilligan states that when creating the series, he wanted to do the color timing for each episode, meaning that he wanted to make sure the colors in each scene would be exactly as he wanted (Gilchrist, 2012).

According to Spadoni (2014), "conventions can point strongly to certain types of films" (p. 11). These conventions can be seen in every type of film, but they are more distinctive in specific genres (Spadoni, 2014, p.11). An example of this is the Western genre, which is also strongly present in *Breaking Bad*, as can be seen from its frequent usage of medium close-up shots. Although, there is no proof of the reliability of the following source, the information from it appears to be correct, based on previous information about the Western genre. Medium close-up shots can also be called

¹ Different colors and their possible meanings can be seen in every episode throughout the series.

“cowboy shots” (Lannom, 2019). These shots can often be seen in *Breaking Bad* episodes, and they seem to be used to portray the power dynamics of two characters (discussed in section 4).

Analyzing any aspect of a film or a series can be done by focusing on camera techniques and whatever may appear on screen. This is because the set-up, every camera angle, and the actors’ placement in the scene is all deliberate and assures that the camera captures the story that the producers and directors want to tell (Martin, 2014, p. 155). Some previous theory suggests that different vertical angles have an effect on how powerful the subject appears. If the subject is filmed from a low angle, they appear more powerful, whereas if the subject is filmed from a high angle, they appear less powerful. According to this theory, for example social learning causes this association between vertical angles and power to be somewhat automatic, and thus it should be visible when portraying an individual’s power in media (Giessner et al., 2011, p. 442). Although in most cases different vertical angles are used in this way, sometimes the effect can be the opposite. Although this is an unofficial source, a blog post on a film production management software website suggests that low angles can also portray vulnerability, based on the scene’s context. For example, seeing a character from an unusual angle can make the viewer feel “irked by the framing” (StudioBinder, 2020). Despite this being a possibility, due to social learning and evolution, vertical angles can be used to legitimize power (Giessner et al., 2011, p. 460). Examples of this theory of vertical angles and portraying power can be seen in the analysis (section 4).

Examining narrative structures is an important part of this thesis. Hühn et al. (2009) introduce some of the core elements of narratology. For example, it is explained that character is a figure in a story, and that the term “character” is used to refer to participants in a story world, whereas “persons” are people in the real world (Hühn et al., 2009, p. 14–15). Narratology in relation to films is also introduced. This information can also be applied to series. Films are set apart from regular, language-based forms of narrativity. Cinematographic elements, such as camera techniques and mise-en-scène can be used to compensate for the absence of a narrator. Although the main elements of narrative techniques differ a lot, they can still be found even in film (Hühn et al., 2009, p. 212). It is also mentioned that film draws on various sources of “temporal and spatial information” (Hühn et al., 2009, p. 214), and that it relies on both the visual and the auditive senses. This means that it is challenging to categorize everything that is operative in its narration (Hühn et al. 2009, p. 214). Eder (2008) introduces the concept of film characters and, for example analyzing them. Film characters are important for films in many ways. They are culturally significant, and important to the production of a film and the film experience. Eder (2008) aims to “integrate findings from various approaches into a general model for understanding, analysing and interpreting characters”

(p.1). Characters are symbols that convey more abstract layers of meaning. Eder (2008) uses information from film studies, as well as narratology, and offers tools for analyzing characters (p. 1).

3.2 Analyzing cinematographic techniques and narrative structure

The methods used in this thesis mostly consist of analyzing the series through elements of film analysis and cinematography. Although these elements are primarily used for analyzing film, the same methods can also be applied to analyzing a series. An essential part of analyzing any film or television series is to find meaning in it. In film analysis this must be done much more deeply and in a more detailed manner than if one were to watch the analyzed film or series casually. In order to truly find meaning in it, one must sort elements of the film into different categories, look for repeated patterns, and find questions that require a more thorough examination of the material (Spadoni, 2014, p. 18–19).

In order to analyze a film or a series more thoroughly and deeply, one must examine beyond just referential meaning. Referential meaning is, essentially, a summary of the plot of the film or the series. It is everything that can be seen or heard in the material, and the meaning of it can be different based on the viewer (Spadoni, 2014, p. 19). This is, of course an important starting point for any film or series analysis, as, in order to analyze the material more profoundly, one must be familiar with the core plot of it. Analyzing the narrative structure of the scenes is also relevant to this study, as it is a large part of how authority is portrayed in the series. Paying attention to characters' powerful lines and analyzing what makes them so powerful can help in understanding the possible differences between the characters' authority, and how it might affect the protagonist's evolving into his more dominant alter ego.

The characters who the protagonist, Walter White (portrayed by Bryan Cranston) will be compared to are Hank Schrader, his brother-in-law, portrayed by Dean Norris, Jesse Pinkman, his business partner, portrayed by Aaron Paul and Gustavo "Gus" Fring, his boss, portrayed by Giancarlo Esposito. The analysis (section 4) is divided into sections for each of the three characters Walter White is compared to, and the characters and their relationship to the protagonist are introduced briefly in the beginning of each subsection. The first of the introductions shall be the protagonist, who does not have his own subsection alone. The reason for choosing to analyze the characters' power dynamics through the methods of filmmaking and narrative structure, is that *Breaking Bad* uses many interesting camera techniques and other features that seem to affect the way the characters' authority is portrayed in the series.

Choosing to compare the protagonist to the other three characters, on the other hand, is based on their differences. Firstly, each of the characters' relationships to the character of Walter White are quite different. Hank Schrader is the protagonist's brother-in-law, making him his family member, thus knowing Walter better personally than the other two characters. Gustavo Fring, for one, is Walter's employer in the drug trade, only getting to know the "Heisenberg" side of the character well. Jesse Pinkman is his old high school chemistry student, with whom he later works, and eventually becomes, in a way, friends with. Jesse spends a lot of time with the protagonist, getting to know both sides of the character, Walter White and "Heisenberg".

Moreover, the three characters can be viewed as being on different levels of social hierarchy, as well as professionally. Hank Schrader is a DEA agent, meaning that he works in the federal law enforcement, setting him quite high in the hierarchy. Gustavo Fring is portrayed as a respected and professionally successful member of society, whereas Jesse Pinkman is sometimes considered a lowlife and a drug addicted criminal. This sets the characters quite far from each other, figuratively, as their public lifestyles in the series are almost complete opposites. Analyzing these three contrasting characters in comparison with the protagonist can help in noticing more possible methods of filmmaking that may have been used in the scenes, as they can be quite different from each other. On the contrary, it may also help discover that there are not many differences in the scenes between these characters, despite them being so contrasting. It is also interesting to see if Walter White's authority is portrayed differently to that of his other persona, Heisenberg.

Each of the scenes chosen for the analysis includes various cinematographic techniques and have been chosen due to the power dynamics visible in them. The analysis includes at least one scene from each of the five seasons of the series, in order to see whether there are differences in the portrayal of power between seasons. Additionally, the analysis section includes screen captures of some of the analyzed shots to support the verbal analysis, as adequately describing some of the camera angles or settings on screen with only words can be challenging.

4 Walter White's evolving authority: analysis and observations

In this analysis section, the character of Walter White and his authority and power will be compared to that of other characters, while paying close attention to how possible changes in authority are portrayed with camera movement and angles, mise-en-scène or other important cinematographic and other factors that can be seen or heard in the shots and in dialogue. This will be done while focusing on how the protagonist evolves into his alter ego, Heisenberg, while becoming a more powerful character.

As mentioned, Walter White is the protagonist of the series. He is a high school chemistry teacher, who gets diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. Due to this diagnosis, he starts to worry about not leaving any money behind and decides to get into the methamphetamine business to earn enough money for his family to use after he dies. He leads a sort of double life, as he is known to his family and friends as a nice and sympathetic family man but is secretly involved in highly illegal and dangerous drug business. As the series progresses, Walter seems to get increasingly “power-hungry”, as his methamphetamine trade keeps expanding. This can be seen for example from episode ten of season two, titled “Over”, in which he is at the store and notices that someone he does not know is buying equipment for making methamphetamine, and he tells him and his friend to stay out of his territory (Walley-Beckett & Abraham, 2009). Walter operates under the pseudonym Heisenberg, in reference to a German physicist called Werner Heisenberg, in order to lead a double life successfully.

4.1 Walter White's authority with Hank Schrader

Hank Schrader is the husband of Walter's wife's sister, making him Walter's brother-in-law. He is a loud and rambunctious Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent, who is often heard making jokes and playfully mocking other characters. He could be considered as quite egotistical, as he appears to like being the center of attention. An example of this could be in the fourth episode of the first season, titled “Cancer Man”, in which the character introduces a new case to several other agents, all the while making jokes and speaking loudly and clearly, in what could be called a boastful manner (Gilligan & McKay, 2008). Walter's relationship with Hank stays the same almost throughout the series. They are quite close with each other, as they are family, but Hank's boastful personality often overpowers Walter's quieter persona. This will be analyzed in the following sections, in addition to examining how differently Walter acts as “Heisenberg”.

4.1.1 Portrayal of Hank Schrader's power over Walter White

In the very first *Breaking Bad* episode, titled “Breaking Bad”, there is a scene in which the characters are celebrating Walter’s 50th birthday. One shot of this scene begins with a close-up on Hank’s hand, in which he is steadily holding a gun. He does not seem to be pointing it in any particular direction, and as the previous shot is from the same party, and the music in the background carries into the next shot, it is clear from context that this shot is still at the birthday party, and the situation is not threatening in any way. The camera then pans up to the character’s face, as he starts introducing his gun to the other party guests. It can immediately be seen from the way he speaks loudly, using jargon, and his body language that he is very confident and knows what he is talking about. The confidence can be seen, for example from the way he is sitting on the couch, leaning slightly forward, and making eye contact with the other party guests while talking. The shot starts with him saying: “Glock 22. That's my daily carry, okay? I mean, unless you're talking, what, +P+ loads, then you can forget the 9 mil, alright? Shit, I've seen one of those bounce off a windshield one time” (Gilligan, 2008, 10:44). This line indicates that the character has experience in the field and with guns and is thus confident enough to introduce the weapon to others.

The next shot in this scene is a wide shot, in which the viewer can see a large portion of the room, some birthday decorations, multiple party guests, and the protagonist Walter White. Hank has been strategically placed in the middle of the shot, which would imply that he is the center of attention at somebody else’s party. As Hank is in the center in this shot, it can also be seen that many other characters around Hank are facing towards him, clearly paying attention to him introducing his gun, further emphasizing his authority in this scene. Walter, who should be the center of attention at his own birthday party, is seen standing further back, appearing smaller. This is already a small sign of his lack of authority with Hank in this scene. In addition to this, the shot is perfectly still, which differs from the usual *Breaking Bad* style, as most shots seem to be shaky handheld camera shots. This could be to emphasize that the character in the center of the shot is confident and steady, and is not, for example, feeling nervous at all, and does not mind the attention he is getting.

Following this shot is a two shot of Hank and Walter’s son, Walter Jr., in which Hank hands his gun to the latter while continuing introducing it. It then cuts to a shot of Walter, who simply says “Uh...” (Gilligan, 2008, 11:01), in a way that sounds like he is trying to say something to interrupt the interaction between the two. He says this while looking into the direction of his son and Hank, after which it cuts back to Hank and Walter Jr. again. This quick and short shot of Walter in between the two shots of Hank and Walter Jr. could be to, again, indicate the protagonist’s lack of authority in this scene. He appears to be trying to stop his brother-in-law from giving a gun to his

underage son but does not manage to get a word in the conversation. After this, Walter Jr. hands the gun to his father, who slightly reluctantly takes it. The reluctance indicates that the protagonist is not used to holding weapons. Although the first shot of Hank holding the gun was also handheld, the first shot of Walter holding the gun is noticeably shakier than the former, which emphasizes his inexperience.

Additionally, the character's grip on the gun seems to be loose and thus less confident than that of his brother-in-law, further emphasizing the power dynamics between Hank and Walter in this scene. This might also be due to Walter not being used to holding a gun in his hand and not knowing what to do with it. Walter's first line holding the gun, is him saying that it is heavy. Hank's reply to this is "That's why they hire men" (Gilligan, 2008, 11:15), implying that Walter is not a man, or that he is somehow less masculine and possibly weaker than other men, or just Hank himself. Ray et al. (2020) suggest that according to many scholars, guns are tied strongly to the societal ideals of masculinity (p. 3). Walter's uneasiness towards the weapon is reinforced throughout the scene, in contrast with Hank's stereotypical and masculine enthusiasm towards the gun (Peters, 2015, p. 31). Hank's line also implies that he may not find the gun as heavy, as he is more experienced with it, and used to holding it. This part is a good example of Hank mocking other characters, and belittling Walter as a person, which, once again, adds to the authority Hank has over Walter in this entire birthday scene.

In the next shot, Hank loudly announces to everyone that he is going to give a toast in Walter's honor. He says, "Come here," (Gilligan, 2008, 11:29) to Walter, and wraps his arm around his shoulder as he steps closer to Hank, making the latter seem more powerful or in control of the situation despite being shorter than Walter. Instead of wrapping his arm around Hank's shoulder, Walter keeps his arm down, which further emphasizes Hank's confidence and control of the situation (see Figure 1). It also makes Walter appear more uncomfortable in the situation, perhaps indicating that he does not enjoy Hank's attitude towards him. Hank's speech includes a joke about Walter's brain being the size of Wisconsin, which helps the viewer imagine a sort of stereotypical American high school's "jocks" and "nerds" archetypes setting, in which the popular "jock" makes fun of the unpopular "nerd". This type of setting also often portrays the so-called jock as the more powerful character because they are able to achieve many things with their popularity.

This shot of the character's speech is a wide shot with Hank and Walter both standing in the middle, surrounded by the rest of the guests and Walter's family members, all facing towards the two. This set-up could indicate that although the toast is about Walter, he is still not the center of attention alone, but instead must share it with Hank. In addition to this, although they are both in the center of

the shot, and take up approximately the same amount of space, Walter still seems somewhat more insignificant and smaller than the other character, possibly due to Hank being placed slightly more forward in this shot (see Figure 1). Walter has been holding a cup of beer in his other hand during each of these aforementioned shots and does so in this shot as well. Hank finishes his speech by toasting with Walter's beer, which he takes from his hand, leaving Walter without a drink. He then drinks some of the beer, all the while still holding his arm around Walter's shoulder (see Figure 1). This small action is yet another indication of Hank's offhand attitude towards and power over the protagonist.



Figure 1. *Hank drinking Walter's beer after giving a speech (Gilligan, 2008, 11:45)*

After this shot, Hank looks at the time on his wristwatch, and says "Turn on channel three," (Gilligan, 2008, 11:50) and leaves the frame walking towards the television. This line appears to be more of a command than a request, as he immediately starts approaching the television, perhaps expecting somebody to turn on the channel for him. It can also be seen that another party guest in the background, slightly out of focus also looks at the time on his wristwatch. This could be an indication that the party guest is also interested in watching channel three at that time, instead of being interested in the party. As Hank leaves the frame, Walter is left there awkwardly still holding the gun, seeming like he does not know what to do with it or where to put it. This can be seen from him changing the hand in which he holds the gun and trying to hesitantly hand the gun to Hank who has already left the shot.

Although giving some attention and recognition to Walter during his speech, Hank instantly makes himself the main focus of the party again, by implying that his television interview is about to begin. This is something that can be noticed from the following shot, which begins by the camera

panning back from the television, in which the viewer can see Hank being interviewed in his DEA uniform. The television shows a microphone being held by someone in front of Hank, as he talks about apprehending some individuals and placing them into custody. In the lower right corner of the television, there is also the logo of the series' fictional KCAV news station, and text that says, "Meth lab seizure" (Gilligan, 2008, 11:54), informing the viewers of what the news story is about. On the left side of the television, there is a curly string of party decoration streamer, which might have been placed there to show that the shot is still from the same birthday party scene. Once the camera pans back, one can also see some balloons, as well as, eventually some of the party guests sitting on the floor, facing the television, looking quite interested in what they are seeing.

The following shot is yet another very good indication of the difference in authority between Hank and Walter in this scene. It is again a wide shot, in which the party guests, as well as Walter's family members are gathered around the television to watch Hank's interview. The characters in this scene are placed on sort of two levels, some of them sitting down, and some of the standing behind the ones sitting down (see Figure 2). Hank is once again placed in the center of the shot, sitting down. However, what makes this shot interesting, is that there is a gap in the center of the shot between the characters that are standing up, through which Walter can be seen standing further in the back. The focus of a shot is often manipulated in filmmaking. This means that the elements, which are in focus are clearly visible, and the elements that are out of focus appear blurry (Spadoni, 2014, p. 97). In this shot, the focus has been manipulated to make Walter appear blurry and small in the background, drinking his beer alone, which is why it can be difficult to even notice right away that he is in the shot at all. The viewer often naturally first notices whatever is in focus in a shot, which adds to Walter's insignificance at his party.



Figure 2. *Walter out of focus in the center of the shot (Gilligan, 2008, 12:01)*

This is quite a short shot but seems to have an important purpose. Once again, Hank and Walter are both placed in the center of the shot, but because Walter is so much further back, and Hank is in the front, it makes Hank appear much larger and in focus than Walter (see Figure 2). Films and series often use a technique called racking focus, in which the viewer's attention is shifted to another part of a shot by changing the focus from one element to another (Spadoni, 2014, p. 99). Instead of racking focus from Hank and the other characters to Walter in this shot, it cuts to another shot, in which Walter is in the front and in focus, drinking alone, while everyone else in the background around the television appears blurry and out of focus. This could be to emphasize the character's loneliness, and how out of place he might feel, as the others' backs are facing Walter, and nobody, including his wife and son, is paying attention to him, despite it being his birthday party.

Showing Walter being isolated from the other characters in a new shot, instead of racking focus could also be so that Walter's unhappy facial expression, and his actions could be seen better, as in the previous shot the actor is quite far away from the camera. Despite being the main focus of this shot, Walter is not quite in the middle of it, presumably to have the party guests in the background more visible. In the beginning of this shot, Walter is facing away from the television, and is looking down, which could imply that he is not feeling particularly happy in that moment. He then turns to look at the television and the other characters, as he becomes more interested in the money from the drug business that is being shown on the television, as can be deduced from him asking about it soon after, in the following shots.

This scene can show the viewer how different Walter is before he starts to evolve into "Heisenberg", and before he becomes a more powerful and authoritative character. His lack of authority is portrayed through camera techniques that make him appear smaller and out of focus. Furthermore, Hank's power is emphasized by placing him in the center of the shot and having him joke about Walter's masculinity. All of this happens before Walter gets interested in joining the drug business, meaning that the character has not yet begun his journey to becoming his more successful and powerful criminal alter ego.

4.1.2 Walter and Hank's authority over Walter Jr.

Another thing to be mentioned about the changing power dynamic between Walter and Hank, is their authority over Walter's son, Walter Jr. In the previously analyzed birthday scene (discussed in subsection 4.1.1), Walter's authority over his own son is not very strong, as can be seen from the shots in which he fails to prevent Hank from handing the gun to Walter Jr. The opposite dynamic can be seen in the tenth episode of season two, titled "Over", in which Walter's family and friends

are having a party to celebrate him being in remission after his cancer treatments. One shot of this scene is a single shot of Walter sitting outside and drinking tequila. In the background Hank can be heard explaining to Walter Jr. about his experience while working in El Paso, Texas, where an informant's severed head had been placed on a tortoise, and eventually exploded injuring several agents. It then cuts to a wider shot of all three sitting around a table, on which there is a large, but nearly empty bottle of tequila. After two shots, there is a shot in which it can be seen that Walter is sitting slightly further away from the other two characters, and the tequila bottle seems to have been placed on the table so that it further separates him from them (see Figure 3). This could be to emphasize that Walter is not participating in the conversation, and although they are all together sitting around the table, he is still somewhat separate from them. He does not even reply to Hank when he asks him something related to the conversation.



Figure 3. *Walter, Hank and Walter Jr. at the table (Walley-Beckett & Abraham, 2009, 11:09)*

Hank then asks Walter to pour him some more tequila. Walter takes the bottle and pours some for Hank, but also throws away the drink from Walter Jr.'s cup and pours him some too. Walter gives his son the permission to drink it, after Walter Jr. looks at him slightly surprised. Hank lightheartedly advises him that it would be better if he drank it without letting his mother see it. He then once again starts telling a story to Walter Jr., when Walter takes the bottle and pours more tequila for Hank and himself, as well as into his son's cup. When Hank sees that Walter is pouring more tequila for his 16-year-old son, he asks him what he is doing. At this point, a new camera angle is introduced. This next shot is filmed from behind Hank's back, having him on the left side of the shot, Walter Jr. on the right, and Walter in the middle. The following shot is similar to this, except it is from the opposite side, having Hank in the middle, and Walter and his son on the sides. The moment where Walter pours Walter Jr. more tequila is where the scene starts to get more

intense, and the dialogue between Walter and Hank also starts to intensify. These new camera angles could be to emphasize this change in the atmosphere of the scene.

As the scene gets more intense, and Walter gets more and more frustrated with Hank, the framing of some of the shots changes. It can be seen that the next couple of shots are closer up to their faces, which could be to accentuate the gradually increasing tension of the scene. It might also add emphasis to the characters disagreeing with each other, and not working together. This can be compared to the previous shots, in which all three of the characters could be seen all at once, possibly indicating that they are still somewhat friendly with each other and not arguing. After these shots, Walter takes the bottle again, pours some more tequila for himself, and moves the bottle closer to Walter Jr.'s cup with the intent of pouring more for Walter Jr., too. Hank tries to prevent him from doing so by placing his hand on top of Walter Jr.'s cup, shaking his head and quietly saying "No," (Walley-Beckett & Abraham, 2009, 13:32) to Walter. This is an indication of how Hank tries to take care of Walter Jr., as Walter's need for control causes him to disregard his son's wellbeing.

At this point the shot changes from Hank to Walter, who gives an angry look to Hank, and pours the tequila over his hand, which Hank then removes, as the shot changes back to him. Hank advises Walter Jr. not to drink the tequila in his cup, stands up, takes the bottle, and starts walking away with it, saying that he thinks they have been "bogarting" (Walley-Beckett & Abraham, 2009, 13:51) it long enough. When Hank is a little bit further away from the table and the other two characters, Walter angrily exclaims to stop Hank, and tells him to bring the bottle back. In this shot Hank is in the front, appearing bigger, and standing up, while Walter is in the back, sitting down, and appearing smaller.

Although it is common in filmmaking to make a more powerful character appear physically bigger, it does not seem that this is the case in this scene. Hank still seems to have more control, as he is carrying the tequila bottle away, but still stops when being called by Walter. At this point, it seems that their authority might be quite equal. However, after Hank refuses to give the bottle back, Walter quickly gets up from his chair, and says "It's my son. My bottle. My house" (Walley-Beckett & Abraham, 2009, 14:07). The character says this quite angrily, which could be an indication of his power. This shot is quite close to Walter's face, as he walks closer to Hank. A medium close-up shot like this can easily make the viewer feel the tension of the situation, as it can be used to show the character's facial expression, while also showing that he is moving forward, towards Hank.

Throughout the series different genres and references to other genres with distinct camera angles and techniques can be seen. One genre that is strongly present all the way through the series, is the Western genre. This can be seen from example from this next shot of the party scene, in which Walter is still trying to get Hank to return the bottle to him. They are both standing up, with a noticeable gap between them. In addition, these are medium full shots, also known as the “cowboy shot” (Lannom, 2019), referring to its frequent use in Western films, where the placement of gun holsters on characters’ waists define the framing of the shot in duel scenes. The position in which Walter is standing, could also perhaps be a reference to the Western genre, as his legs are slightly apart, and his hands are by his sides. This Western style shot adds emphasis to the battle of power over Walter Jr. between Walter and Hank. Walter does not give up on trying to get the bottle back, but as Walter Jr. vomits due to drinking too much tequila, Hank rushes to help him. He sets down the bottle on the table, and Walter goes back to drinking tequila at the table, while looking quite satisfied. This can be seen because of the medium close-up shot of his face, as he drinks the tequila.

Another interesting factor to notice about this scene with Hank and Walter, is about the colors present in the shots. Walter can be seen wearing a red shirt (see Figure 3). Although there is no proof of the reliability of the following source, a “Breaking Bad Wiki” article suggests that red in *Breaking Bad* signifies aggression, anger and violence (“Colors,” n.d.). This theory seems applicable here, as the context of this scene, as well as many others, would suggest that this is, in fact, true. In addition to the red shirt, in some of the shots, a red napkin and some red beverage can be seen in the foreground. Other red elements in this scene are the red plastic cups from which Walter Jr. and some of the guests are drinking, as well as the red artwork on the fence behind Walter. Hank, and every other character in the scene, however, are wearing brown clothing.

Additionally, the tequila, the fence, and almost everything else in this scene appears to be some shade of brown, or a similar color. Brown seems to signify humility, stability and strength (“Colors,” n.d.). The few red items in this scene really stand out amidst all the brown colored elements. It is likely that the red color in this scene refers to Walter’s aggression and his desire to have control over the situation, as he is the only character wearing red. This scene seems to contrast with the birthday party scene (discussed in subsection 4.1.1), where Walter is portrayed as relatively powerless, and Hank is often seen in the center of a shot. Conversely, in this scene, Walter appears more powerful, as he tries to win control over his son. It can be seen that Walter has already started to evolve into “Heisenberg”.

4.1.3 Reversal of positions

Although Walter tries to have more authority in the previous analyzed scene (subsection 4.1.2), and it seems that the “Heisenberg” persona is slightly visible in it, Hank also still has a lot of authority. An example of a situation where Walter has more power than Hank, is in a scene at the end of the ninth episode of season five, titled “Blood Money”. Walter goes over to Hank’s garage to talk to him, after realizing that he may have figured out that he is the infamous Heisenberg the DEA agent has been trying to find for a long time. At first, Walter approaches Hank in a friendly manner, asking him how he is doing, and making small talk, not yet revealing what he knows. At this point, there are some medium close-up shots of Hank, perhaps to better show the viewer his uncomfortable expression, as he pretends that he does not know about Walter’s illegal business.

After some seemingly friendly conversation, Walter starts to walk away from the garage. However, he stops at the door and then slowly turns around and walks back to Hank. Walter then takes a GPS tracker out of his pocket and asks Hank if he knows anything about it, as he found it on his car, and it is the same kind as a tracker he has previously seen Hank use. At this moment, Hank realizes that Walter indeed knows that he has figured out who he really is. Hank does not say anything, but takes a remote control, which he then uses to close the garage door. Walter says that he does not like the way Hank is looking at him, referring to his very angry facial expression. It seems that the protagonist is still trying to hide his secret identity at this point. After this there are a couple of single shots of both staring at each other for a moment, until Hank hits Walter. He then pushes him against the garage door, saying “It was you” (Gould & Cranston, 2013, 42:47), meaning that Walter is Heisenberg. Hank pushing Walter against the door where he cannot escape the situation makes Hank seem more powerful and in control for a moment (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. *Hank pushing Walter against the garage door (Gould & Cranston, 2013, 41:44)*

Hank's anger is amplified with close-ups of both characters' faces, where it can be seen that Hank still looks very angry, while Walter looks a little bit distressed as Hank holds onto the back of his neck with force, talking about him being Heisenberg. Hank then lets go of Walter, who calls his theory "wild accusations" (Gould & Cranston, 2013, 42:26), still not admitting to doing any of the things he knows he has done. There are then medium close-ups of Hank quietly listening to Walter as he explains that his cancer is back and that even if Hank managed to convince others that he is Heisenberg, he would never see the inside of a jail cell as he is dying. Hank tells Walter to have Skyler, Walter's wife, bring their children to their house, to which Walter says, "That is not going to happen" (Gould & Cranston, 2013, 43:55). The power of this line is emphasized with a close-up on Walter's face as he says it, showing his stern expression better (see Figure 5). Comparing the shot of Hank pushing Walter against the door to this close-up shot of Walter shows the viewer how much "Walter's" and "Heisenberg's" authorities differ from each other (see Figures 4 and 5), as, in the latter one he seems to be talking as "Heisenberg" rather than "Walter".



Figure 5. *Close-up on Walter's face as "Heisenberg" (Gould & Cranston, 2013, 43:54)*

It then cuts to a close-up on Hank's face, who looks somewhat shocked as he says he does not know who Walter is, implying that he is not the kind of person he thought he was. Walter's response to this is, "If you don't know who I am then maybe your best course would be to tread lightly" (Gould & Cranston, 2013, 44:17). This line is also delivered in a close-up shot of Walter and makes him seem even more powerful and dangerous. He appears to say this as a threat to Hank, who still looks quite shocked. The scene ends with a steady wide shot of both characters standing still in the garage, staring intensely at each other without saying a word. This shot could be to emphasize the tense atmosphere after Walter claims authority over Hank, especially since it is a steady shot, and

stands out from the usual handheld shots. The atmosphere in the small talk portion of the scene and the later arguing part has been portrayed slightly differently with camera techniques. When Hank is still unaware of Walter knowing that he knows he is Heisenberg, there are mostly medium close-ups. However, in the later part, close-ups have been used to perhaps better show the character's expressions and to add intensity to the scene. Another observation to make about this scene is that Hank is wearing a red shirt. As is known from previous analysis, it is the color of aggression and violence, emphasizing Hank's rage towards Walter.

Although the scene ends there, the situation carries on into the next episode, titled "Buried", where Walter can be seen walking out of Hank's garage as the door opens (Schnauz & MacLaren, 2013). He walks to his car in a medium close-up shot, after which he turns around to face Hank, who walks to the door of the garage and looks at him. It then cuts to a medium full shot of Hank from a low angle, and then a similar shot of Walter. The next shot is a hip level shot towards Walter, who is standing further away (see Figure 6). Lannom (2019) suggests that hip level shots are often used in Western films, due to gun holsters being on the hips. Instead of a gun in this scene, Hank can be seen holding the garage door remote control in his hand, which he then uses to close the door. The next shot is a similar hip level shot towards Hank, who starts to get hidden by the door that is closing in front of him. All of these shots appear to be references to the Western genre, implying that the two characters are against each other. Their level of power in this scene seems quite equal, which is most likely because at this point it is not yet clear who is going to ultimately win authority over the other one.



Figure 6. *Hip level shot with Hank holding the garage door remote control (Schnauz & MacLaren, 2013, 3:48)*

All things considered, it can be seen from these previously analyzed scenes that Walter White's relationship with Hank Schrader is quite close, as they are family. Hank seems to know the "Walter" side of the protagonist better than the "Heisenberg" side, as he is shocked to find out about Walter's secret persona. Walter's friendly family persona appears to be much less powerful and have less authority than his drug boss "Heisenberg" persona. This can be seen from the first analyzed scene, which is from the first episode of the season, before Walter even gets into the methamphetamine business. Compared to the earlier analysis in this section, in which Walter threatens Hank as Heisenberg, this scene is different in many ways. The camera angles and other techniques used are much calmer and Hank-centered than in the later scenes, where Walter has more control.

4.2 Walter White's authority with Gustavo Fring

Gustavo "Gus" Fring is a character introduced later in the series, in the eleventh episode of the second season, titled "Mandala" (Mastras & Bernstein, 2009). He is an influential character, who owns a seemingly successful fried chicken fast food restaurant chain called Los Pollos Hermanos. He uses this business to launder money, and as a cover up for the illegal, large-scale methamphetamine operation that he is running in the background. The character is presented as a professional, gentlemanly businessman, who tries his best to keep his secret drug trade hidden. He "hide[s] in plain sight" (Hutchison & Bucksey, 2010, 39:34), as the character himself said, by, for example, sponsoring a charity event for the DEA in the thirteenth and final episode of season two, titled "ABQ" (Gilligan, Bernstein, 2009). Although Gustavo seems friendly at first, he eventually turns out to be a very powerful, dangerous and cold-blooded criminal.

Walter's relationship with Gustavo starts as very professional and respectful. They first meet in the episode that introduces Gustavo, at one of his chicken restaurants, where Walter purposely goes to meet him. They speak to each other with respect, and this goes on through many of their encounters. It is only during the last of Gustavo and Walter's encounters that they start to get more openly aggressive towards each other, as Walter tries to have some authority with Gustavo, who is his powerful employer. This will be analyzed in the following sections.

4.2.1 Portrayal of Gustavo Fring's power over Walter White

The power dynamic between Walter and Gustavo does not seem to change very much throughout the series. During most of the scenes with the two characters, Gustavo seems to be the one with more authority and control, as he runs a major illegal operation involving dozens of underlings, including Walter. An example of a scene in which Gustavo seems to have control over Walter, is in

episode eleven of season three, titled “Abiquiu”, when Gustavo invites Walter over for dinner at his house. The scene begins with a wide shot of Gustavo’s house’s front door, which Walter slowly approaches from outside of the frame. It is dark, and Walter stands in the shadow on the right side of the shot. The purpose of this shot could be, firstly, to show the viewer that Walter has arrived at the location, and that a new scene has begun. In the previous scene, Walter has received a phone call from Gustavo, inviting him to dinner, which, based on the character’s facial expressions, seems to surprise him.

This shot of Walter slowly approaching the front door from the shadows, could also imply that Walter does not know the purpose of this dinner invitation, and is quite cautious and careful. This could be a reference, or a visual representation of the expression “to be in the dark”, which literally means “to not know about something that other people know about” (Cambridge University Press, n.d.-a). This is already one sign that Gustavo may have more authority in this situation than Walter does. The only visible source of light in this shot comes from the two lights on both sides of the door, which could further add to the notion that Gustavo knows more than Walter about this situation, thus having more control. The protagonist also stops for a short moment, possibly to emphasize that he is thinking about what the purpose of this dinner might be.

The next shot is a medium close-up of Walter still outside, looking towards the door, with a serious facial expression. He then continues walking forward, as the shot changes to a wide shot of the house, Walter’s car, and Walter slowly approaching the door and ringing the doorbell. The character’s car is parked in the shadow, too, which creates consistency, as it appears in the same manner as its owner. This wide shot lasts for about seven seconds, which is quite long, taking into consideration how little happens in it. This type of lingering shot seems to be quite typical for *Breaking Bad*, and it emphasizes the slow pace of the situation, and Walter’s doubtfulness. The next few shots are medium close-ups of Walter and Gustavo, as the latter opens the door to let his guest in.

The following shot after this is from inside Gustavo’s house, where there are some children’s toys on the floor. This might be to indicate that Gustavo trusts Walter enough to let him into his personal life, instead of the usual business surroundings. It could also mean that he knows he is much more powerful than Walter, and thus is not afraid of letting him get near him and his family. It should be noted that some of the toys in this shot are red, which, as mentioned before, is the color of violence and aggression in *Breaking Bad*. This is not to imply that the children or Gustavo’s family would be in any way violent or involved in his secret drug empire, but it could be used to support the theory that he is not afraid of Walter, as his power and aggression are with him even in his home.

Gustavo enters the shot from the right, walking at a relatively fast pace. He stops for a moment in the center of the shot, while casually talking about the dish he is cooking for Walter. He then exits the frame, as Walter enters, walking noticeably slower, and looking around. The camera then follows him, as he goes further into the house, following Gustavo. Walter's slow entrance, and the camera staying on him instead of following the faster moving Gustavo, is, perhaps, a choice made by the director to, once again, highlight the protagonist's uncertainty in this scene. The visible uneasiness and suspicion that this creates, might be an indication of Walter's lack of authority and control. After this there is a medium shot of Walter, once more, standing in the shadow, while Gustavo is in the kitchen where there is more light.

Next up in this scene is a wide two shot of both of the characters. Walter continues to slowly approach the kitchen, while still looking around him, perhaps getting acquainted with his surroundings. Meanwhile, Gustavo can be seen preparing the dinner in the kitchen, while talking about it. Gustavo moving fast while washing vegetables and talking about an everyday subject like cooking, is in contrast to Walter's slow movements, quietness and cautious approach, which further emphasizes that Gustavo has more knowledge and power in this setting. Then, Gustavo can be seen reaching for a kitchen knife in a medium shot, after which there is a close-up shot of him pulling the knife out of a knife rack. The shiny, sharp-looking knife, and the sound the knife makes when being pulled out of the wooden block, create a slightly threatening image, as Gustavo then points the knife towards Walter for a short moment. This can be seen well in this close-up shot, which has most likely been used to shift the viewer's attention on this particular action.

Following this, it then cuts to a two shot, in which Gustavo turns the knife around, and hands it to Walter, asking if he would mind slicing the garlic. In between two of these two shots, there is a single medium close-up shot of Walter, in which his, perhaps, slightly suspicious facial expression can be seen. This could suggest that Walter does not trust his boss, as he does not know his true intentions with the dinner invitation. He then carefully takes the knife from Gustavo, after which there is a close-up shot on the knife once again. This time a reflection of Walter's face can be seen in the blade of the knife. He looks quite concerned, and not at all happy or excited, as he turns the knife slightly while looking at his own reflection in it. This interesting close-up could be another visual representation of a word. As in the earlier shot, as Walter was "in the dark", literally and figuratively, this time he is reflecting, in two meanings of the word. As Cambridge Dictionary defines, to reflect means "to think carefully, especially about possibilities and opinions" (Cambridge University Press, n.d.-b). This shot of Walter looking into the knife's reflection, could

symbolize him reflecting on his past choices, or thinking about what there is to come for him, as he is still unsure of Gustavo's objective.

Another possible meaning for this close-up is that, perhaps it symbolizes him holding his own fate in his own hand. Perchance, the character could have thought about defending himself with the sharp knife, in case he needed to do so. This would mean that the authority in this scene could have easily changed from Gustavo to Walter. The following shot could support this theory, as it is a two shot of the characters, in which Gustavo is in the front of the shot, his back facing Walter, and he is out of focus, whereas Walter is in the back, but in focus, and facing Gustavo. The latter being in the shadow and out of focus, could imply that Walter has the option to take control of the situation if he so desires. However, in this shot, he also looks around, confused, for a moment, until finally asking why he was invited for dinner. Gustavo's reply to this is "We're working together. Why not break bread together?" (Shiban, Schnauz & MacLaren, 2010, 39:57). He then asks Walter, again, to slice the garlic, by saying "Now, the garlic?" (Shiban, Schnauz & MacLaren, 2010, 40:03) while pointing towards the cutting board and looking Walter in the eyes. Although this was only a polite, and seemingly friendly request, Gustavo seems quite assertive in the way he speaks, maybe to the extent where Walter has no choice but to do as he asks.

The following is a close-up shot of Gustavo sitting at the table, enjoying dinner, and talking about how it amazes him how "senses work in connection to memory" (Shiban, Schnauz & MacLaren, 2010, 40:23). It then cuts to a shot from outside of the dining room window in which the viewer can see both of the characters sitting at the table, having dinner. The window frames the two characters into separate sections, perhaps to imply that although they are sitting at the same table having dinner together, they are still somewhat separate from each other, when taking authority and their professional relationship into consideration (see Figure 7). There are then a few single shots of both Gustavo and Walter, while Gustavo finishes his wondering about the connection of senses to memory. Walter then starts explaining the science behind the connection of senses to memory, which seems to slightly surprise Gustavo, based on his facial expression, and him pausing putting down his spoon, and looking slowly up at Walter from his plate, as he listens to his explanation. There is then a two shot of the characters, but this time from inside the dining room, without the window frame separating them. This might be to imply that they are now closer, and perhaps more equal even when taking authority into consideration, as Walter joins the casual conversation for the first time since arriving. Perhaps he trusts the other one more after asking him about his intentions and getting a relatively friendly reply.



Figure 7. *Gustavo and Walter in separate sections, framed by the window (Shiban, Schnauz & MacLaren, 2010, 40:31)*

The characters appear to be physically on the same level at the table, which makes them appear even more equal to each other. In fact, the setting is so similar on both sides of the table that the two characters might almost remind one of someone looking into a mirror and seeing the reflection. The overall atmosphere that these shots have is quite different to that of the earlier shots in this scene. Previously there seemed to be a feeling of unease and anxiety, as Walter was so wary and cautious in his actions, whereas these later shots seem much more relaxed, as if two friends were having dinner together. Some of the single shots of Gustavo at the dinner table seem like they may have been filmed from a slightly lower angle than those of Walter, possibly indicating a difference in power, as low shots are often used for this purpose, but it does not seem to make an easily noticeable difference in this situation. It is, however, a useful aspect to mention, as the character of Gustavo, generally-speaking, still has much more authority over Walter at this point of the series. This can be seen, for example, from Walter's vigilant approach to Gustavo's dinner invitation.

Throughout all these shots from inside the house, there is music playing in the background. It starts as soon as Gustavo opens the door for Walter, which could indicate that, what appears to be jazz, reinforces Gustavo's characterization as a gentlemanly and sophisticated businessman. This fast-paced music stays in the background until the shot where the characters are sitting at the dining table, perhaps to add even more contrast between Gustavo's confidence and faster movements, and Walter's cautiousness. The music then changes to a classical, Spanish language song, which is slightly calmer and more slow-paced than the jazz song. This, for one, could be to emphasize the difference in atmosphere, as well as to show that some time has passed since the previous shot. The

scene then ends with a few shots in which Gustavo advises Walter to never make the same mistake twice and expresses that he wishes he had had a mentor when he first started in the business. This part of the scene consists of single close-up shots of each character, which makes them, once again, seem slightly more separate from each other. The only two shot in this part is when Gustavo talks about himself and Walter collectively, as opposed to giving him advice as his superior, thus, ultimately, seeming slightly more powerful in comparison to the other character, again.

This scene shows that, although Walter's uncertainty and cautiousness are portrayed through lighting, and placing him in the shadow, he still appears slightly more confident than in the first analyzed scene (discussed in subsection 4.1.1). Despite Gustavo being a very authoritative character, Walter is portrayed quite equal to him. This indicates that, perhaps, the "Heisenberg" alter ego and his power are visible in this scene, even though the characters are only calmly discussing business matters.

4.2.2 Gustavo Fring vs. Heisenberg

Another example of Gustavo's authority over Walter is in a scene in the first episode of season four, titled "Box Cutter". In this scene, Walter, his business partner Jesse Pinkman and two other characters are in Gustavo's big, underground methamphetamine laboratory, which is hidden from the public underneath an industrial laundromat. Walter works for Gustavo in this laboratory, but Gustavo does not trust him, and intended to replace him with another character who knows the chemistry well enough, and then kill Walter. In this scene, Gustavo has just learned that Jesse killed the only person who could replace Walter as his methamphetamine "cook", as is called, in order to save Walter's life. The first shot of the scene that is relevant for this analysis, begins with Gustavo entering the laboratory. He comes in through a door that leads to a platform above everyone else. He slams the door shut quite loudly, perhaps because he is angry, and then takes a few steps forward on the platform. As he does this, the camera zooms in closer to his face, going from a medium full shot to a medium close-up. This relatively slow zoom in might be to better show the viewer his calm but unhappy facial expression, as he looks down at the other characters.

The next shot is a high angle shot towards Walter, Jesse, and Mike, one of the other two characters in this scene. Walter is looking up at Gustavo, making the former look smaller and less powerful in this shot. This is because "conventional wisdom suggests that variations in vertical picture angle cause the subject to appear more powerful when depicted from below and less powerful when depicted from above" (Giessner et al., 2011, p. 442). After this there is a shot from a slightly different angle compared to other scenes analyzed so far. This is a low angle shot, in which Walter

is in the middle, in focus, but only his head and shoulder are in frame. Jesse is on the left side of the shot, out of focus, and Gustavo is further in the background, still up on the platform, completely out of focus, appearing almost as a shadow, as he stands there in the darkness for a moment, and then exits the shot. Although Walter is the only character in focus in this shot, and is much more in the front than his boss, Gustavo is still portrayed as a powerful character who is in charge, as he is filmed from a low angle, and can be seen looking down at the other two characters.

The next shot is a sort of point-of-view (POV) shot, as it has been filmed from underneath the grate floor of the platform and follows Gustavo as he walks along the grate and down the metallic spiral staircase. It creates the feeling of standing beneath the platform and looking up at the character as he walks, because a point-of-view shot can help a viewer to “identify more closely with a character” (Spadoni, 2014, p. 61). This kind of shot truly emphasizes how much higher than the other characters Gustavo is, and makes him seem more intimidating in this situation. Although this often-used method of portraying a character’s power with low angles is present in these few shots, the next continuous shot somewhat contradicts this. It is an overhead shot, also known as a bird’s eye view shot, which, as the name suggests, has been filmed from above the characters’ heads, as if looking down from a bird’s point of view. Although this angle makes the characters look smaller and is often used to give more power to the viewer, in this instance it does not seem to necessarily have that effect. The shot follows Gustavo from the bottom of the stairs, around the laboratory equipment, all the way to Walter and Jesse, who are sitting down. This overhead shot seems to emphasize how slowly Gustavo is approaching the two, and adds tension to the scene, as the viewer waits to see what happens next.

Another possible reason for this shot is that from this point of view, Gustavo can be seen surrounded by red, as the laboratory’s floor is red (see Figure 8). As has been previously mentioned, red in *Breaking Bad* signifies aggression, anger and violence, but, additionally, it also signifies blood (“Colors,” n.d.). This wide, overhead shot of Gustavo surrounded by red, is possibly to accentuate his otherwise not very visible anger towards Walter and Jesse. It could also be to foreshadow the upcoming part of the scene, in which he kills another character. In addition, Gustavo can be seen wearing a red shirt underneath his suit jacket. As he walks forward in this shot, Walter and Jesse can eventually be seen sitting down, holding their arms and hands in a similar position. This may just be a coincidence, but it is possible that the actors have been directed to sit in a similar manner. Their arms form almost a circle, when seen from above (see Figure 8), which could be to indicate that they are in the same situation and are waiting to see what the slowly approaching Gustavo is planning to do. After this comes a three shot of Walter, Jesse and Mike, in

which the first two are still seen sitting down, while Mike is standing in the background, slightly out of focus. Being out of focus, and wearing black clothes in the dark space, the character does not stand out as much as Jesse and Walter, who appear to be the main point of this shot. Walter slowly looks up at Gustavo, possibly showing that he is still above him, both physically, and from the perspective of authority.



Figure 8. *Overhead shot of the characters (Gilligan & Bernstein, 2011, 27:28)*

Breaking Bad's references towards the Western genre can once again be seen in the following shot, as it is a medium full shot of Gustavo looking at Walter. Although Walter is sitting down, Gustavo's firm standing position might remind one of a cowboy in a Western quick draw duel, about to pull his gun out of a holster. However, Walter sitting down makes this "duel" quite one-sided, which puts emphasis on Gustavo's power over him. The fourth character in this scene, Victor, can also be seen standing diagonally behind Gustavo, but him being further back, and standing in a slightly more relaxed manner, while appearing fully in the frame, instead of in a "cowboy shot" (Lannom, 2019), makes him appear much more powerless and insignificant to this shot.

Next up is a close-up shot of Walter looking sternly up at Gustavo. This shot could be to have the viewer pay closer attention to the protagonist's facial expression, perhaps to show that he is still trying to have some authority in this situation. Gustavo can then be seen walking past Walter and Jesse, to the back of the laboratory. As this happens, it cuts, again, to a close-up of Walter's face, but this time, the camera turns a little bit, to reveal Gustavo in the background, out of focus, Walter still looking stern. He then slowly turns around to look at Gustavo, and the focus "racks" from one

character to the other. Gustavo can then be seen taking off his suit jacket, and placing it on a coat hanger, as Walter turns back around, and the focus turns back on him.

As the focus is back on Walter, he starts talking about the reason Gustavo is angry, trying to defend himself, while the viewer can see Gustavo in the background taking off his tie and carefully folding it, and placing it on top of a clothes rack. This shot seems to emphasize Walter not knowing what Gustavo is about to do, as he slowly turns to look at him in his curiosity. It also shows how influential Gustavo is, even without saying a word, as it highlights his actions. The next shot is a medium close-up of Gustavo, in which he can be seen calmly taking off his red shirt, and hanging it up, in preparation for bloodshed, while the out-of-focus Walter continues defending himself in the background. There are then a few more similar shots of Walter trying to save himself and Jesse by angrily, and possibly nervously, explaining, while Gustavo calmly puts on some sort of a protective suit.

Walter's excessive talking, while Gustavo does not say a word, and does not make eye contact to him, ignoring his attempt to defend himself, underlines just how much more control the latter has in this scene. This is emphasized by using a few different camera angles while showing Gustavo changing into the protective suit, almost the entire time, even when Walter is in focus in the shot. The protective suit he puts on is orange, which, in *Breaking Bad* appears to signify action and violence ("Colors," n.d.), further insinuating that the character is about to do something unpleasant and violent. Walter, on the other hand, is wearing a blue shirt, which seems to represent loyalty, suggesting that Walter wants to prove his loyalty to his boss, in order to survive ("Colors," n.d.).

Once Gustavo finishes changing his clothes, he finally turns to look at Walter, and starts to approach him. When he is almost next to him, there is a close-up shot of Walter, in the background of which, Gustavo can be seen approaching him quite closely, while looking down at him. The close-up, once again, shows the viewer closer how Walter also looks up at his boss, which makes the difference in authority more visible. Next up, there is another overhead shot, in which Gustavo can be seen keeping his eyes on Walter, as he slowly passes him. Presumably, the purpose of this bird's eye view shot is to emphasize Gustavo's slow movements, and to remind the viewer of the red color surrounding the characters, while also making all five characters visible at once. This also shows that Gustavo walks to a drawer, and after a few other shots, takes a box cutter out of it.

Following this, there is a close-up shot of Gustavo's hand holding the box cutter. The shot begins with Walter being in focus in the background, until the focus "racks" to the box cutter, which Gustavo then pushes open. As the blade comes out, Walter pauses his monologue for a short

moment, after which the focus moves back on Walter, who is now looking at the box cutter. He stutters a little bit as he continues his explaining, indicating that he is increasingly nervous upon seeing Gustavo take out the sharp object. Gustavo once again moves closer to Walter, while holding the box cutter, and it cuts to a low angle medium close-up shot of Walter, who is in focus, with Gustavo's hand and the box cutter being in the foreground of the shot, out of focus. This is yet another good example of a low angle shot being used differently to the usual power-enhancing manner. Although Walter takes up most of the shot, and is in focus, the sharp blade of the box cutter, appearing much larger than it really is, due to perspective, causes Walter to seem much less powerful (see Figure 9).



Figure 9. *Walter appearing weak in a low angle shot (Gilligan & Bernstein, 2011, 31:31)*

The scene then includes some shots of Gustavo calmly moving closer to Victor, until he suddenly kills him by cutting his throat with the box cutter. Walter and Jesse look understandably shocked, while Gustavo lets Victor bleed out while making eye contact with the two characters. He then slowly walks to the laboratory's safety shower station, where he calmly washes his face and glasses. He then walks back to the clothes rack, where he puts on his red shirt, suit jacket and tie again, while there are some shots of the other characters looking at him, as he does these actions. After this there is a high angle shot, where the camera turns, following Gustavo as he walks to the staircase, and up the stairs back on the platform. Walter can then be seen together with the other characters from a high angle shot, in which he is sitting down hunched, thus looking very weak and fragile, as he looks at Victor's body on the floor in front of him. It then cuts to a wide shot of Gustavo walking on the platform, but as the area is very dimly lit, he almost appears as only a silhouette. There is then a medium close-up of him, in which he stops walking, and looks down at the other characters from the platform. He then delivers his only line in the entire scene, which is "Well? Get back to

work,” (Gilligan & Bernstein, 2011, 35:40) and exists the scene through the door, which can be seen from a low angle shot of Walter and Jesse looking up at the platform, which is out of focus. This line is something that one might expect a boss to say and emphasizes Gustavo’s authority.

Gustavo’s only line in this scene further confirms that he is, indeed, the one in control. He does not need to shout or say it in an otherwise irritated manner, as he is already aware of having established enough authority to order his employees back to work in a calm and neutral way. As Peters (2015) suggests, Gustavo’s silence in this scene can be quite a powerful linguistic strategy (p. 21).

Especially in the Western genre, which can often be seen in the series, silence “establishes dominance at the same time as it protects the silent one from inspection and possible criticism by offering nothing for the interlocutor to grab hold of” (Tompkins, 1993, p. 60). The effect of this method is that it forces the one who is speaking into an “ineffectual flow of language” (Tompkins, 1993, p. 60), trying to achieve significance by saying things that only cause the speaker to have less and less power with every word (Tompkins, 1993, p. 60). This is exactly what seems to happen to Walter in this scene, as he is constantly talking, but his words do not seem to have a big effect on Gustavo or the outcome of the situation. Walter nervously and desperately explains to Gustavo that the laboratory is useless without Walter’s expertise, and that if he kills Walter or Jesse, he has nothing.

This scene is a great example of how *Breaking Bad* uses different camera angles and camera movement to emphasize a character’s authority, even when he does not say a single word until the very end of the scene. Although a big part of Gustavo’s authority in this scene stems from Giancarlo Esposito’s acting, the photographic directing of it certainly adds a lot of dimension to it. The power of silence in contrast to Walter’s nervous rambling, paired with the different camera angles truly seems to help the viewer focus on the tormenting lack of control that Walter experiences. One might focus more on Gustavo’s actions, and the visual side of the scene, due to him not saying much, even though Walter speaks almost the entire time. Evidently, Gustavo possesses more control in this scene, even without saying a word.

Walter White’s relationship to his employer, and possibly even enemy or competition, is quite different to his relationship with Hank Schrader. As Gustavo is not a member of Walter’s family, he does not seem to be afraid to show his “Heisenberg” side to him. It could also be that the “Heisenberg” alter ego is necessary for Walter, when interacting with authoritative and dangerous people like Gustavo. Walter himself without his other persona may not have enough power against Gustavo. Based on the previously analyzed scenes, Walter does not seem to have a lot of power over Gustavo, despite being able to use his alter ego around him. However, it also appears that

Walter is not willing to easily give up on his power with Gustavo, as he is often cautious and suspicious around him, and tries to defend himself by talking even when he knows that Gustavo is very angry. The only occasion where Walter has clear authority over Gustavo is in the thirteenth episode of the fourth season, titled “Face Off”, in which he plans together with another character to kill Gustavo, and succeeds in doing it (Gilligan, 2009). However, Walter is actually not seen at all in Gustavo’s death scene, making it somewhat irrelevant for this analysis, as there are no comparisons between the two characters to be made.

4.3 Walter White’s authority with Jesse Pinkman

Jesse Pinkman is another major character in *Breaking Bad*, in addition to Walter. He used to be Walter’s chemistry student in high school and met Walter again in the first episode of the series, when they started working together in the methamphetamine business. Jesse is addicted to drugs, and uses them almost entirely throughout the series, having a few longer moments of sobriety. The character is portrayed as quite easily influenced, as he, for example starts using heroin after his new girlfriend, Jane, introduces it to him in the eleventh episode of the second season, titled “Mandala”. As Walter describes Jesse in the twelfth episode of season five, titled “Rabid Dog”, with him there are “emotional issues, personal issues, some drug abuse. But he has always been more of a danger to himself than anyone else,” (Catlin, 2013, 17:18). This appears to be true, as the character of Jesse often tries to come up with solutions to avoid killing people, and he seems to like children, and does not want to hurt them. He, for example develops a warm and friendly relationship with his girlfriend Andrea’s son, Brock.

Jesse’s relationship with Walter throughout the series changes constantly. Although they work together as equal partners, Walter often treats Jesse as his inferior, as can be seen from the following analysis. However, regardless of Walter treating Jesse in such manner, and them being partners, Jesse clearly has respect for Walter. This can be seen, for example from Jesse almost always calling Walter “Mr. White”. The respect most likely originates from the time when Walter was Jesse’s high school chemistry teacher, as it is customary in American schools to call the teacher respectfully by their last name. This is an indication of how the authority stays similar throughout the years, due to Jesse’s teacher having turned into his partner. Nevertheless, Jesse continues to call him by that name throughout the series, despite Walter never asking him to. One of the few occasions when Jesse calls him “Walt” is in the fifth episode of the second season, titled “Breakage”, where they are arguing about something, and Jesse most likely does this to purposely disrespect Walter, or to show him that he does not think of him as his superior (Walley-Beckett & Renck, 2009).

4.3.1 Jesse Pinkman vs. Mr. White

A scene that is in almost complete contrast with the previous piece of analysis regarding Gustavo's authority, is in the ninth episode of season four, titled "Bug". The scene begins with a close-up shot of Jesse opening the peephole on the door of his house, through which Walter can be seen, with an unhappy expression on his face. Jesse closes the peephole almost immediately, when he sees that it is Walter who is behind the door, as he invited him over. It then cuts to a wide shot of inside of Jesse's house, where he can be seen opening the door and letting Walter in. He then closes the door, as Walter walks in and asks if he should sit down, to which Jesse says yes.

Walter can then be seen sitting down in the same shot, while Jesse starts explaining to him that he has been told by their superiors to go to Mexico, where he is to teach Walter's methamphetamine formula to some cartel chemists. He explains that because Gustavo does not trust Walter, he wants Jesse to go instead, and expresses his worry about not knowing how to answer the chemists' possible questions, as he himself is not a chemist. He also explains that he is worried that if he makes a mistake, they might kill him, and tells Walter that he needs his help, and that perhaps he could instruct him or give him some notes.

Jesse's entire explanation is all one continuous shot of over two minutes, from one camera angle, which contrasts with the previously introduced scene with Gustavo, where several different shots from several different camera angles were used (discussed in subsection 4.2.2). What adds even more contrast between these two scenes, is that Walter does not say much during Jesse's monologue. The shot being a wide shot, where both characters and their movements, or the lack thereof, can constantly be seen, helps the viewer to determine who has more authority in this situation. Although Jesse is standing up, and Walter is sitting down, this does not seem to add to Jesse's power in any way. This could be because Jesse keeps nervously moving around, as he talks, while Walter sits completely still the whole time (see Figure 10).

In addition to this, Jesse voicing his concerns, while Walter stays mostly quiet, once again, brings forth the power of silence. Another observation to be made about this shot is that Walter is sitting on a couch that has red stripes on it. Although the couch belongs to Jesse, Walter sitting on it might suggest that he is feeling anger and aggression, based on the earlier discussed meanings of the color. Something that would support this approach, is that at this point of the episode, Walter already knows that Jesse is lying to him. This is because in earlier scenes, it could be seen that Walter inserted a GPS tracker on Jesse's car, in order to track his movements. He then removed it to retrieve the data from the device, thus finding out that Jesse has been to Gustavo's house. In his

explanation, Jesse implied that he has not seen Gustavo, or been visited by him, which Walter now knows to be untrue. The reason this makes Walter so angry, is that they made an agreement in which Jesse is supposed to put ricin, a type of poison, into Gustavo's food or drink. However, knowing that Jesse is lying about meeting Gustavo, he might suspect that Jesse has no intention to follow their plan to kill Gustavo, thus endangering Walter's life. Yet another observation to take into consideration is that there is a coffee table separating Walter and Jesse from each other in this shot, perhaps to indicate that they are not working together or agreeing with each other (see Figure 10). It might also be a sort of barrier to protect Jesse from Walter's anger, or to protect the two characters from each other, as can be deduced from the following analysis.



Figure 10. *Wide shot of Walter sitting still while Jesse is standing up and moving around (Walley-Beckett, Schnauz & McDonough, 2011, 38:44)*

The next shot in this scene is a close-up of Walter, when he asks Jesse if he saw Gustavo. After this comes a medium close-up shot of Jesse, who denies seeing him. This transition from the wide two shot to close-up one shots possibly indicates a sudden change in the atmosphere of the conversation between the two characters. It also separates the two even further, and adds tension to the conversation, as the viewer gets to see the characters' facial expression closer up. Equally important is to note that, despite both character close-ups being handheld and shaky, as is customary for the series, Walter sitting down helps his close-up to be visibly much more still than that of Jesse, who is standing up and constantly moving. This is a filmmaking method similar to the one introduced before, in the section comparing Hank and Walter (discussed in subsection 4.1.1), where a character's confidence is enhanced by stabilizing the shot, whereas shakiness often creates a feeling of unease and nervousness.

Following this, Jesse tells Walter that the information was “passed down” (Walley-Beckett, Schnauz & McDonough, 2011, 39:43), after which there is a low angle shot of Walter, who wonders by whom the information was “passed down” (Walley-Beckett, Schnauz & McDonough, 39:47). In this case, the low angle has the appearance of portraying power, as Walter sits firmly with his elbows on his legs and fingers crossed. The shot is almost from floor level, which makes the character appear much larger (see Figure 11). Walter then angrily says “You haven’t been with Gus. You haven’t seen Gus. You haven’t spoken to Gus. You weren’t at Gus’ house last night,” (Walley-Beckett, Schnauz & McDonough, 2011, 39:57) implying that he knows Jesse has done all of those things. Walter says this in quite a stern way, adding to his authority. All of this is still portrayed from that same low angle, making the character seem much more intimidating.



Figure 11. *Low angle shot of Walter (Walley-Beckett, Schnauz & McDonough, 2011, 39:49)*

It then cuts to another wide shot of both characters, as Walter quickly gets up from the couch and approaches Jesse in a threatening manner. He can then be seen aggressively grabbing Jesse’s jacket, as he searches his pocket for a pack of cigarettes. This is because, in the seventh episode of season four, titled “Problem Dog”, Jesse hid the small ricin container into one of the cigarettes in his pack (Gould, 2011), and Walter wants to confirm his suspicions about Jesse hiding something from him. Walter going through Jesse’s jacket in order to find cigarettes creates a school-like setting, with a teacher-student dynamic. This indicates that the teacher, “Mr. White”, has authority over his student, Jesse. The purpose of this wide shot is, perhaps, to show both of the characters at once, while showing the viewer that as Walter approaches Jesse, he gets closer to a corner of the room, having no space to dodge or escape Walter. Being cornered, Jesse’s control of the situation diminishes, and Walter, in his anger, throws the cigarette pack on the floor for Jesse to pick up, which further brings down Jesse’s authority. In this shot, one can also see that Walter moves to the

other side of the coffee table to Jesse, thus crossing the metaphorical line that it earlier created between the two characters. This could be to imply that there is no longer anything protecting them from each other, as the conversation escalates.

The lighting in this scene is quite fascinating, as there are lights shining from above onto the floor, creating circular light spots. During the first continuous shot, Jesse paces back and forth between some of the lights, but never stops directly underneath one, until Walter gets up and pushes him on one of the circles. Walter himself does not stop directly underneath the lights, either, staying in more shadow than Jesse the whole time. This action of pushing Jesse into the light could be another symbolic reference. It could mean, for example, that Walter is forcing Jesse to “shed light” on the situation. It could also symbolize Jesse’s innocence in this situation, as, although he is not telling the truth to Walter, he does not have any evil plans against Walter. Walter being in the shadow, for one, might once again refer to him being “in the dark”, and not knowing the whole truth of the situation, taking some power away from him. However, as he seems to think he knows what Jesse is hiding, this does not have a large effect on his authority. Walter then turns his back to Jesse and starts walking further away from him, while Jesse follows him, moving directly underneath another one of the lights, Walter still being in the shadows.

The next shot in this scene is a medium close-up two shot of the characters, Walter still facing away from Jesse, as he tries to defend himself, explaining why he lied and did not poison Gustavo. Walter then turns around to face Jesse, as it changes to another medium close-up, from the opposite direction, showing Walter facing Jesse. Walter then angrily says “Two hours, eighteen minutes, and you couldn’t figure out a way to give it to him?” (Walley-Beckett, Schnauz & McDonough, 2011, 40:52), referring to the poison, and revealing the exact time Jesse spent at Gustavo’s house. Jesse’s reply to this is that Gustavo never left the room, to which Walter yells “You lying little shit!” (Walley-Beckett, Schnauz & McDonough, 2011, 40:57). This line is an indication of how angry Walter is, and how little respect he has for Jesse in that moment. His calling Jesse “little” could imply that he thinks Jesse is somewhat insignificant or childlike, thus having less authority.

In addition to this, it should be noted that Walter often treats Jesse as intellectually inferior to him and talks to him in a manner that suggests he thinks he might be somewhat less intelligent. This can be seen for example from a scene from the first episode of season five, titled “Live Free or Die”, in which Walter and Mike are arguing about how to destroy some evidence against them, which the police have filed in their evidence room (Gilligan & Slovis, 2012). The two characters can be seen in the front of the shot, arguing, while Jesse appears small and out of focus in the background between them, repeatedly suggesting a solution to their problem. After multiple attempts, Walter

finally angrily asks him what he is talking about. This might suggest that Walter does not think Jesse's idea matters, and thus does not pay attention to him, even when he has the solution. The way in which he angrily asks him about his idea only after he has said it many times, seems like he is belittling him, and once again treating him a little bit like he is a child.

After Walter calls Jesse a liar, he continues his angry explaining to the latter, who slowly realizes that Walter in fact knows the exact time he spent at Gustavo's house, thus understanding that he might have put a tracker on his car. The following shot is yet another Western style medium full shot, in which Walter pulls the tracker out of his pocket, confirming Jesse's suspicion, in a manner that seems to be a reference to a cowboy pulling a gun out of a holster. He then throws the tracker to Jesse, who catches it, as they continue arguing. This shot of Jesse catching the tracker is a medium close-up shot, perhaps to show the character's unhappy emotions, while also having enough of him visible to see that he catches the device. This medium close-up then shows Jesse saying "Everything that I have done for you," (Walley-Beckett, Schnauz & McDonough, 2011, 41:47) implying that he is probably quite disappointed with Walter, and that he thinks he does not deserve to be tracked by Walter, after being loyal to him for so long. It then cuts to another medium full shot of Walter fiercely shouting at Jesse "What you've done for me? You killed me, is what you've done!" (Walley-Beckett, Schnauz & McDonough, 2011, 41:55) possibly meaning that he does not think Jesse has done much good for him.

Next up is another wide two shot of the characters, maybe to show that Walter's body language is somewhat aggressive, as he points at Jesse in an accusatory manner. Meanwhile Jesse stands still and looks down at the tracker in his hands, perhaps to indicate that he is still thinking about how Walter has betrayed his trust, or trying to keep his anger inside, while Walter yells at him. Once Walter implies that he thinks Jesse will inevitably end up making a mistake and dying in Mexico, Jesse grunts and throws the tracker at Walter's head. This is showed with a quick change of angles, there being a medium shot from behind Jesse, as he starts to throw the tracker, then cutting to a very quick medium full shot while he is still in the process of throwing it, and finally cutting back to a medium shot of Walter as he finally gets hit by the item. A rapid change in shots, such as this, during such a short action, adds motion, power and aggression to the situation, which would, presumably, look much less dramatic and slower portrayed only from one angle. This makes Jesse appear more powerful, as well as Walter appear weaker, followed by a shot that emphasizes this even further.

The next shot is a very low angle close-up shot, possibly even a ground level shot, pointing up towards Walter's face, who is bent over the camera from the impact, and is shown bleeding. He

looks very surprised and slightly shocked, which, although filmed from a low angle, makes him seem less powerful than Jesse, even though Jesse cannot be seen in this particular shot. Regardless of low angle shots often making a character appear more powerful, this shot works in the opposite way, possibly because it emphasizes how close to the floor Walter is from the impact. Walter can then be seen from another angle lifting his face up and turning towards Jesse, looking very angry, although still bent over, implying that he has not fully recovered from the hit. This position could also be a reference to an angry bull in a bullfight, who is about to attack, based on the following shots, in which Walter snarls at Jesse as he starts running towards him.

Jesse can also be seen starting to approach Walter, when it cuts to a few wide shots of them wrestling with each other. In these shots, Walter pushes Jesse into a wall, which shows the viewer that he has more control in this situation, until Jesse then pushes Walter back. At this point, there is a close-up on Walter's glasses on the floor, which he can be seen accidentally kicking and breaking because Jesse pushes him towards them. This close-up, as Jesse causes Walter to break his own glasses, could foreshadow Jesse eventually winning the fight. Although Jesse is shown to push Walter further for a short moment, the next shot is an overhead shot of Walter throwing Jesse onto the floor. This wide overhead shot gives the viewer a better view of the action, adding power to Walter. There are then a couple of shots from different angles, in which Walter goes on top of Jesse who is still on the floor, as he presumably tries to keep him there. However, Jesse is once again given slightly more control in the scene, when it cuts to a ground level shot of Walter, whose face Jesse's hands can be seen pushing and slapping.

Although Jesse gets some of his power back by defending himself in the previously described way, the shot of Walter is from such a low angle that it nearly looks like a point-of-view shot, which can help the viewer see what Jesse is seeing. He is in a situation that he cannot escape in that moment but tries to have more control by smacking Walter's face. The following shot is almost the opposite of the previous one, as it is a high angle shot from Walter's point of view, showing Jesse on the floor, while Walter's finger is in his mouth. It is not entirely clear, but it appears that Jesse might be biting the finger. These two shots set both characters on a somewhat equal level of power, as they are both trying to hurt each other. It then cuts to another low angle shot from Jesse's point of view, in which he can be seen pushing Walter's eye with his finger, which causes him to lose control for a moment, as he gets thrown on the floor next to Jesse.

These chaotic fighting shots from multiple different angles continue for some time, as Walter pushes Jesse into some furniture, and Jesse hits him with some items, as well as his fist. The characters end up wrestling and punching each other on the floor again for a short moment, until

they are too exhausted to continue. This scene being filmed from multiple angles adds to the chaotic atmosphere of the fight, and makes it seem more fast-paced. The control and authority between the two seem to change equally from one character to another all throughout the sequence.

Once the characters have seemingly finished their physical fighting, Walter starts to get up. However, Jesse finally takes full control of the situation by grabbing Walter's leg, causing him to fall and hit his face on the coffee table. At this point there is a close-up shot from underneath the transparent table, where Walter can be seen hitting his face on it. This is a useful detail, giving the viewer a better idea of how hard the character hits his face. Jesse then gets on top of Walter who is now back lying on the floor, and he starts to hit the latter continuously with his fist. This can be seen from many different angles, adding more power to the action, which emphasizes the force of the hits and Jesse's authority. Once he is done hitting Walter, the former gets up. Walter is shown getting up slowly in a separate shot after Jesse, indicating that he may have suffered more from the fight. Jesse asks Walter if he can walk, to which he says yes. Jesse then says, "Then get the fuck out of here and never come back" (Walley-Beckett, Schnauz & McDonough, 2011, 44:04), eventually taking ultimate control of the situation with this powerful line. His making sure Walter can walk first could imply that if he had not been able to, Jesse would have thrown him out with physical force.

However, only Jesse's words after the fight seemed to be enough to get Walter to leave, as can be seen in the following shots. Jesse walks away from the room before Walter moves anywhere, indicating that he knows his words were strong enough to make him do as he said, after which Walter is seen in a wide shot weakly opening the door and walking through it, closing it after him. Despite Walter appearing to have more power in the beginning of this scene, and the control changing rapidly back and forth between the two during the fight, at the end, Jesse seems to win the fight and power over Walter. This is portrayed by using fewer camera angles before and after the fight, when the power dynamic was clearer and more stagnant, and more camera angles when the fight was ongoing, and authority changed a lot.

This scene begins with Walter being portrayed as the more powerful character, as he sits still and quietly, while listening to Jesse's nervous explaining. His power is emphasized with a shot from a low angle, and him suddenly approaching Jesse aggressively. Although the scene then escalates into a physical fight, which Jesse ultimately seems to win, as he tells Walter to leave, Walter's alter ego is certainly visible. It seems that Walter's aggression manifests in the form of "Heisenberg", as he violently fights with his business partner.

4.3.2 Heisenberg's empire

Towards the end of the series, Walter's evolving into Heisenberg starts to be even clearer than before. A scene in which Walter seems to be more powerful than Jesse is in the sixth episode of the fifth season, titled "Buyout". Jesse goes over to Walter's house to try to talk him into quitting the methamphetamine business together with himself and Mike, who they are working with. The scene begins from within the house, with Walter opening the door for Jesse. He nonchalantly opens the door without even looking at Jesse and walks away from the door and out of the frame. As the door opens, Jesse can be seen cautiously looking inside the house while he enters and closes the door after him. He acts this way because earlier in the series Walter has not allowed Jesse to come to his house in order to hide his illicit business from his family, but this time his children are not home, and his wife, Skyler, already knows the truth. The shot being from within the house, instead of outside, from Jesse's point of view, lets the viewer see how carefree and casual Walter seems in his actions, while also emphasizing Jesse's cautious entrance into the house. It then cuts to a wide trucking shot, which means that the camera follows Jesse as he walks further into the house.

Once the camera moves far enough, Walter can be seen in the frame, sitting on an armchair with his legs up on a footstool. The two characters are on the opposite sides of the shot, with Walter being on the left, sitting in a relaxed manner, and Jesse standing on the right side of the shot, looking slightly tense and unsure of whether he should sit down or not. He then makes sure it is acceptable for him to be there, after which he finally sits down on another armchair. Walter can be seen leaning back on his chair, while Jesse sits on the edge of the chair, leaning with his elbows on his knees. This suggests that Walter is much more comfortable and at ease. He can also be seen holding a glass of something, presumably whiskey, as it appears to be in what looks like a whiskey glass. Alcohol can often be seen as a catalyst for fights over authority. This can be seen, for example in the scene in which Walter is drinking tequila with Hank and Walter Jr. (discussed in subsection 4.1.2). Additionally, whiskey seems to often be associated with masculinity, as, for example many whiskey commercials appear to target men, and portray men consuming the advertised product. Thus, Walter drinking whiskey in this scene might emphasize his masculine power.

Jesse starts talking to Walter about their business, hinting that Walter should sell his share of their methylamine, which they stole in order to use it for making more methamphetamine. Walter does not want to do this, because he thinks the methylamine would be worth much more if made into methamphetamine, and he wants to continue the methamphetamine business. His reply to this suggestion is "Absolutely not," (Hutchison & Bucksey, 2012, 28:54) after which he drinks some of his beverage. This wide shot of the two, with both of them sitting in ways that might reflect their

states of mind, seems to make Walter already appear more powerful in this scene. His strongly refusing to sell his share and taking a sip of his drink while sitting back on his armchair adds to his already slightly boastful image.

Next up is a single shot of Jesse, who continues trying to convince Walter to get out of the business by talking about how much money they could earn just by selling the methylamine. In this shot Jesse is filmed slightly from the left, from a diagonal angle in his chair. In addition, it is a dirty shot, which means that Walter's hand can be seen in the frame, although out of focus. During Jesse's convincing it cuts to a single shot of Walter, who is filmed from straight ahead, and it is a clean shot of only him. With only the shot of Walter being a clean shot, it seems to emphasize Walter's presence in this scene. Additionally, Walter being filmed from straight ahead, it makes him appear almost as a ruler on his throne. Once Walter joins the conversation in order to explain to Jesse why he does not want to quit, and how much the business means to him, he quickly leans forward on the chair, possibly to use his body as a method of expressing himself more effectively. Jesse does not seem to understand why Walter wants to continue in the business, so Walter starts to tell him about a company called Gray Matter, which he co-founded with his friends when he was younger. He tells him that something happened between him and his two friends, which caused him to sell his share of the company for five thousand dollars, which he later started to regret, as the company is now worth over two billion dollars.

When Walter starts explaining this, it cuts to another wide shot of the two, this time showing that both of them are sitting the same way, leaning forward with their elbows on their knees. This could suggest that Walter is trying to appear equal to Jesse in order to make him understand his reasoning better, by mirroring Jesse's movements. After he is done telling Jesse about the company, Jesse says to him that their current situation is not the same. Walter then leans back in his chair again, reaching for his drink, which is now on a table next to him. He then says to Jesse, "You asked me, if I was in the meth business or the money business. Neither. I'm in the empire business," (Hutchison & Bucksey, 2012, 31:37) referring to Jesse asking him that earlier in the scene. After he says this, he takes another sip of his drink. This part of the scene makes Walter appear much more powerful than Jesse, as he is sitting on his emperor's "throne", drinking, what appears to be whiskey, and talking about the methamphetamine empire he has created or is creating (see Figure 12). Jesse then asks him, if a methamphetamine empire is really something to be that proud of, possibly still trying to convince him to quit the illegal business.



Figure 12. *Walter sitting on his “throne” (Hutchison & Bucksey, 2012, 32:27)*

Overall, it may be said that Jesse Pinkman’s relationship with Walter White is quite complicated. The two characters often visit each other’s homes, and spend a lot of time together working, which is why Jesse knows both of Walter’s personas. For example, in the first analyzed scene with Jesse, he invited Walter over in order to ask him for advice because he knows that he is smart and often offers solutions to their problems, but ends up violently fighting with what appears to be “Heisenberg”, instead of the friendly “Walter” side of the character.

Walter having already fully evolved into “Heisenberg” can be seen quite well in this scene. He has started a business that he plans to turn into a drug empire. The protagonist’s power is portrayed through camera angles and body position, as well as through the usage of props. The armchair that Walter sits in can be seen as a metaphor or a symbol for a throne that an emperor might sit on. Additionally, he is holding a glass of whiskey, which adds to the portrayal of his masculine power. Although it is not visible in this scene, the “Heisenberg” persona often wears a black hat, whereas Walter does not tend to wear anything on his head. This hat could be a symbol for an emperor’s crown, which is something that he started wearing already in the beginning of the series. It could be that the black hat foreshadowed Walter’s evolving into a powerful drug emperor from the very beginning.

5 Discussion and conclusion

Ultimately, it seems that Walter White is a “power-hungry” character who wants to have control over people, and to be in charge. The protagonist’s authority can slowly be seen evolving and changing throughout the episodes, as he spends more time as “Heisenberg”, and starts to develop different habits and character traits for each persona. The changing authority between each analyzed character in this thesis is visible in multiple ways. These methods are quite easy to notice when examining the material more thoroughly, but they do not seem to bother the viewing experience when viewing the series casually. The various camera techniques and other methods certainly do influence the way in which the characters’ power dynamics are portrayed. In addition, linguistic aspects and narrative structure also seem to affect the portrayal of authority in the series. Walter White’s changing authority and persona in relation to the other characters is amplified by using different camera movements and angles, among other filmmaking techniques. The different cinematographic techniques are used to portray different levels of authority.

Although the various methods do affect how authority in the series is shown, they do not seem to change much depending on the character, despite the characters being so contrasting. The characters all have their own separate personalities, which affects the way their power is portrayed through acting and lines. For example, Gustavo’s character seems to often rely on taking control of the situation by staying relatively quiet and only saying what is necessary, whereas Walter tends to have longer monologues. Notwithstanding, the cinematographic techniques used to portray power seem to be quite similar for each character. The differences in the methods appear to be visible only between the character with more authority and the character with less authority, regardless of which character is which. Nevertheless, Walter’s friendly family persona seems to appear significantly less powerful than the “Heisenberg” persona. However, the methods to show these differences seem to be fairly similar to other demonstrations of power dynamics in the series.

The techniques used to portray Walter’s evolving authority also seem to stay quite similar throughout the seasons. However, the “Heisenberg” persona is visible more often in the later seasons as the character evolves. Although the analyzed episodes have different directors, and each director most likely has their own style of directing, it does not seem to affect how authorities are portrayed, either. This is one aspect that could be examined further in the future with a slightly different approach, as it is difficult to definitively see how the different directing styles affect the portrayal of authority, based on these few analyzed scenes.

All in all, it seems that the directors have successfully portrayed the changing power dynamics between the characters in many ways. Camera angles, camera motion, shot structure and other similar cinematography techniques all have an effect in conveying these differences. These methods and how they are used to show Walter's changing authority seem to mostly be based on the situation and the intensity of the scene. The viewer can quickly get used to seeing mostly shaky handheld shots, as most of the shots in *Breaking Bad* have been filmed this way. This causes the occasional steady shots to stand out and thus they have been effectively used to emphasize a character's power and confidence in several shots. The series also uses camera angles and other techniques in ways that differ from the usual. For example, vertical angles have been used in opposite ways to how they are most often used. This can be seen, for instance when Jesse hits Walter, who is then filmed from a low angle but still appears weaker than the other character (discussed in subsection 4.3.1).

Although many elements of mise-en-scène are visible in the series, some categories seem to be more relevant regarding portraying authority than others. Costume and lighting are aspects that can be seen many times throughout the analysis. The different, presumably carefully planned colors of the characters' outfits all refer to the characters' emotions or personalities, often foreshadowing aggression or violence through red. Aggression and violence can often be associated with power, which is why the more powerful character in a scene can often be seen wearing or being surrounded by red. These red items or pieces of clothing also often seem to foreshadow a character's upcoming rage or authority. Another relevant category of mise-en-scène, lighting, seems to often be used to emphasize the difference between two characters' authority in a scene, by placing one of them in light and the other one in the shadow.

Based on the analysis, medium close-ups do not seem to be used to portray authority often. They usually appear in calmer scenes, where the conversation or actions are not particularly intense. However, they seem to be used to emphasize another character's power by showing the more powerful character in a close-up, while the less powerful character is shown through a medium close-up. Conversely, close-ups in *Breaking Bad* seem to be used in mainly three different ways: to show objects in detail, to add intensity to a scene by emphasizing a character's facial expressions, and to isolate characters from each other by showing that they are not agreeing on something. This method is used quite similarly between each of the three characters. Walter White is compared to in the analysis (section 4). At least one of each analyzed characters' scenes includes a close-up on an object, such as a knife or a gun. These objects seem to often emphasize a character's power in the scene or, conversely, the lack of it. When a character's facial expression is emphasized with a close-

up, or when it is shown that two characters are not agreeing on something, the close-up appears to always add to at least one character's authority.

In addition, one shots that can be from any proximity, seem to be used in a similar manner to close-ups. That is, to emphasize a character's facial expression to add power, and to separate them from each other when they are disagreeing. Two shots, however, are often used in the opposite manner. They show two characters in the same frame, which can be used to bring them closer before or after a one shot. This creates equality between the characters, showing the viewer that neither of them possesses more power in that scene. Nevertheless, two shots in *Breaking Bad* are also used to separate characters, to create a power dynamic. This is done by using objects as "walls" or separating barriers. In each characters' section, there is an example of a scene with this feature, such as the bottle of tequila between Hank and Walter (discussed in subsection 4.1.2), or the coffee table between Jesse and Walter (discussed in subsection 4.3.1). This type of a separating object also often shows that the characters are not agreeing with each other, but the power dynamic in that situation depends on the type of shot that is used. It also seems that new camera angles in a scene are introduced when the situation starts to get more intense. For instance, there is a scene that begins with a long continuous shot from one angle when the conversation is still somewhat calm, but new angles start to appear as the conversation starts to intensify (discussed in subsection 4.3.1).

Wide shots in the series seem to often be used to show character placement, perspective or focus, in order to emphasize a character's authority, or to show a change in the atmosphere of the scene. Examples of each of these ways of usage can be found from the section about Walter and Hank (discussed in subsection 4.1). The shot is also usually used to show multiple characters in one shot, perhaps to emphasize the difference in their movements. A wide shot was used in this way, for example when Jesse was nervously pacing around while Walter was calmly sitting down, thus making Walter appear more in control of the situation. Body language is another method that *Breaking Bad* seems to use to portray power. A character's confidence can often be seen through their body language and movements, or sitting position, for example. In addition to body language, authority is often portrayed with powerful lines. There are many examples of these throughout the series, but there seem to be some differences in these between characters. Hank is often heard boasting about his achievements confidently, whereas Gustavo does not talk as much.

The power of silence is another method that is often used throughout the series. There are many scenes in which the character who is not talking as much has more authority in that situation. This is an indication of how silence can be used as a powerful method in narrative, as the character who is speaking can easily make the situation worse by continuing to talk, while the character who stays

silent can evoke a feeling of unease in the other one. The narrative structure of the series including a substantial amount of silence seems to add emphasis to some of the characters' lines, making them more powerful. When a character says something short and assertive after a long period of silence, it appears to sound more effective. The reason for this might be that once the character has been silent for long enough, the viewers pay more attention to the sudden line, as they may not have been expecting it.

Masculinity and the portrayal of masculine power through objects and actions seems to be a big part of the series. For example, alcohol, guns and knives appear in many scenes, all of which can be emblems of masculinity and power. This can be seen, for instance, from the difference in the way Hank and Walter hold Hank's gun in the very first episode of the series (discussed in subsection 4.1.1). Walter's "Heisenberg" alter ego seems to possess more of the traditional masculine power, than the protagonist's family persona. Another feature that can be considered to relate to the theory about masculine power, is the presence of the Western genre throughout the series. Medium full shots, also known as cowboy shots (Lannom, 2019) or hip level shots, are used several times in *Breaking Bad* episodes. Most of these shots appear to be used as methods to convey a "power battle" between two characters. In these shots the characters usually seem quite equal, in terms of authority. However, there are also examples of scenes where one character pulls out an item that can be thought of as a reference to a gun in a holster in a Western film, while the other character does not have any item. In these cases, the character with the item seems somewhat more powerful.

There are many more elements relating to this topic that could be examined further, such as different features of mise-en-scène or the color theory that seems to be present in every single episode of *Breaking Bad*. Additionally, Walter evolving into "Heisenberg" could be examined in various ways, and he could be compared to many other characters. A series with dozens of episodes, such as *Breaking Bad*, can offer multiple fascinating research topics, especially through cinematographic and linguistic analyzing methods. It would also be interesting to analyze the different characters more thoroughly, as there are so many aspects that could be examined.

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